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# Gaullist Shifts Story On Ben Barka Case

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PARIS, Jan. 25 — Gaullist Deputy Pierre Lemarchand reversed his previous denials today and admitted he had seen Georges Figon after the kidnaping of Mehdi Ben Barka on Oct. 29.

Figon was apparently the key man in the abduction of the Moroccan opposition leader, who is believed to have been murdered. French police found Figon dead of a bullet wound Jan. 17 and pronounced it suicide, a verdict widely doubted here.

Lemarchand denied stoutly for almost three months that he had seen Figon after the kidnaping. He reversed himself under the skillful questioning of Judge Louis Zollinger but still denied that he had seen Figon before the crime. Figon had claimed Lemarchand was the "higher-up" who guaranteed him immunity in the kidnaping. Lemarchand had acted as Figon's lawyer in the past.

Lemarchand's role is an important issue for France, because he headed the extra-legal police who combatted the Secret Army Organization of French terrorists during the Algerian war. He has been suspected of involvement in similar activities since — for instance, the kidnaping in Germany of Col. Antoine Argoud, the Secret Army leader, which resembled the Ben Barka kidnaping.

If participation in the Ben Barka affair is definitely pinned on Lemarchand, it will hit the government in one of its most sensitive spots—its employment of clandestine police forces born of the Algerian war.

There were these other developments in the Ben Barka case today:

• Reda Guedira, former Moroccan Foreign Minister and a close personal friend of King Hassan II, returned to Morocco after a four-day visit here to try to smooth over the Franco-Moroccan rift. France has accused Moroccan Interior Minister Gen. Mohammed Oufkir of instigating the crime and taking part in it personally. As a result, both countries have recalled their ambassadors.

Guedira saw no officials, but talked with "persons well placed" to convey any messages to the appropriate officials. Neither France nor Morocco seems anxious to push their break any farther.

• George Boucheseiche, whom several witnesses have identified as one of the Ben Barka kidnapers, wrote to Zollinger from Germany. He asserted his innocence but refused to return to France because he is afraid of meeting the fate of Figon. It is reported here that Boucheseiche is hiding in the Moroccan consulate in Hamburg.

• Those who do not believe in Figon's "suicide" added new testimony. The conservative Figaro sent reporters to Figon's apartment; they said he could have escaped from the police and that a murderer could have entered and escaped unseen. "Nothing proves Figon was still alive when the police surrounded his apartment," Figaro added.

The tabloid Paris-Jour quoted experts from services not involved in the case as concluding from the coroner's report that the shooting was probably not a suicide.

The weekly Express noted yesterday that Figon's "suicide" resembled that of another criminal suspected—like

Lemarchand and Figon — of having been involved in the Argoud kidnaping. He was found by police with a bullet hole in his right temple and declared a suicide, even though he was left-handed. Figon was buried yesterday with Catholic rites usually denied to a suicide.

L'Express carried Figon's interview claiming he saw Ben Barka murdered. Jean Marvier of L'Express gave Zollinger today the names of four persons who heard Figon tape-record his confession. Marvier said the transcript of the recording was typed by Edward Behr, a British journalist working for Newsweek magazine.

• A campaign seems to be underway to involve the CIA in the Ben Barka case. The evidence is fuzzy, but the highly reliable (and pro-American) Figaro asked why Philippe Berrier, a journalist who helped lure Ben Barka to Paris, has not been questioned since his arrest Nov. 26—in terms implying he was "not unknown" to the CIA.

The illustrated weekly L'Express published an interview attributed to an anonymous former officer of the French counter-espionage services, one of the police forces most thoroughly compromised in the case. He said that Oufkir had promised \$100,000 for the delivery of Ben Barka, which he couldn't scrape together, and implied that the CIA had provided part of the money. L'Express put the sum at \$40,000; Lemarchand today said it was \$250,000.

[A leftist rally of 10,000 persons tonight called on President de Gaulle to resign because of the scandal. Francois Mitterand, who lost the runoff presidential election to de Gaulle last month, was the main speaker, Reuters reported.]